

Exclusive VI MENN-interview with CIA's top chief!

-William Egan Colby- the man and the organization-

(Interviewed for VI MENN by Erik Sletholt.)

As the first and only foreign publication VI MENN was invited to interview the director of America's secret intelligence organization- William Egan Colby. He engaged VI MENN's correspondent in a 5-hour long candid conversation.

The man who today heads up the much talked about and highly controversial CIA tells- for the first time-about his role as a leader of sabotage-activities during ~~the~~ WW II against the Northern Norwegian Railroad in the Snåsa mountains. He also comments on the worldwide activities of the secret intelligence organization, the serious accusations which have been directed against CIA, and the necessity for carrying on intelligence-activities in order to preserve peace in the world.

- " I would like to express my appreciation and admiration ~~for~~ the Norwegian people. Once my destiny lay in your hands. At that time you stood by me through thick and thin, you were always helpful and treated me wonderfully. I believe that our two countries can look forward to a great future in the spirit of co-operation. I would also like at this time to send special greetings to all my old friends over there".-

With this greeting to Norway the director of CIA, William E. Colby, ended his interview with VI MENN April 15th 1975.

America's Central Intelligence Agency- CIA - is located in a huge building complex nestled in a wooded area about 15 kilometers outside Washington D.C. in the community of Langley, Va. We turned off the main highway and drove in on a side-road through the woods which ended at a gate to the grounds.

It's not easy to get in unless proper arrangements have been made beforehand- but this we had done. VI MENN had been - as the only foreign publication - invited for an exclusive interview with the director of America's secret

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intelligence service, William Egan Colby.

The guard at the gate looked at the invitation, called Mr. Colby's assistant, Angus MacLean Thuermer, for confirmation and then explained to me how to drive in.

Another guard stopped me near the building, gave me instructions as to where to park, and I finally got to the reception desk where my next problem was waiting for me.

According to regulations all camera-equipment and electronic gear, including tape recorders, have to be left at the reception desk. But another call to Mr. Thuermer resolved that matter. An assistant came down and picked up both me and the equipment. However, I did have to leave my camera in Mr. Thuermer's office.

William Colby is an unassuming, pleasant and friendly man who looks very youthful for his 54 years. If I had expected a James-Bond-type I would have been disappointed. He is of medium height and looks like a conventional businessman or lawyer, which he also happens to be in reality. Yet, while there is nothing outwardly blustering about him, he nevertheless has led an adventuresome life.

Question): - You were the leader of the only american operation in Norway during WW II Mr. Colby. Could you tell the readers of VI MENN what it was that led to this operation?

(Answer): - I graduated from Princeton University in 1940. When America entered the war in 1941 I went into the service and was assigned to the Parachute Field Artillery. In 1943 the OSS Intelligence Service(Office of Strategic Services) was looking for french-speaking parachutists and I signed up. After finishing training I was dropped into northern France where I worked with the resistance movement.

(Answer): - In the meantime a special branch had been formed at the 99th Battalion. It consisted of a group of Norwegian-Americans- many of them sailors who had been stranded in the US because of the war- and who became american citizens by signing up in the military. This group was trained by the OSS for possible drop into Norway. In the fall of 1944, this group came to Scotland for the last phase of their training, and I joined them in October of that year.

In March 1945 the Germans had begun to pull their troops back from northern Norway in order to use them as reinforcements on other fronts in Europe. In an effort to prevent this, it was decided that we were to blow up the Nordlands-railroad to make it useless for troop transports.

On Palm Sunday 1945 we left a base in Scotland with 8 planes, but it didn't turn out as well as we had hoped. One of the planes crashed on the Orkney islands, one ran into a mountain top in Trøndelag, and one had to make a forced landing in Sweden. Three had to turn back altogether. These three made three more attempts to get there and one of them finally managed to land the crew. Later the men from Sweden joined us too. I had gotten down in good shape together with the other fellows from my plane. We also found the men who had been killed in the crash in Trøndelag and buried them. But that was much later.

Lieutenant Herbert Helgesen from the Linge Company was the commanding officer for the Norwegian troops. I was incharge of the Americans.

We set up our headquarters at Javsjø farm, near the landing strip in the Snåsa mountains, and from this base we proceeded to carry out two successful missions dynamiting the railroad.

(Question): Did you get into any action with the Germans?

(Answer): Nothing other than the usual expected in such circumstances. One of our targets was a railroad bridge which ~~was~~ of course was guarded. During the battle for the bridge I was sprayed in the face by mud from a bullet that struck close to me where I was lying. But nothing more serious happened to our group at that time.

(Question): You did fight a German patrol that came across your base, didn't you?

(Answer): Yes, that's right. After our second dynamiting the Germans sent out some patrols to find us. They knew they were dealing with americans because we had put american flags at the site of the explosions. One of the patrols just happened to come upon our base and they actually attacked us instead of calling for reinforcements. The result was that the patrol was wiped out while only one ~~man~~ of our men, -an American, was wounded.

(Question): Looking back one often recalls the amusing episodes.....

(Answer): Amusements take on rather modest proportions under such circumstances- aside from the comradeship- --but I do recall one episode very well. Some of our guys were sitting around bragging about the OSS and what it could do- and there were seemingly no limits to ~~what~~ it could accomplish. The norwegian fellows were somewhat dubious of all this bragging which prompted on of the Americans to burst out: " ok, just tell us what you'd like to have, and we'll get it."- "All right", one of the Norwegians answered, "I'd like to have a pineapple."

Later that night they came to ~~me~~ with a request - no-it was really more of a plea- to get hold of a pineapple. At that time all parachute drops had been suspended for safety reasons, but we were still getting our supplies by sled- transports from Sweden. I told the fellow he must be out of his mind, but in my next dispatch to London I did include the request for pineapple. I figured that headquarters would probably think that I too must be out of my mind, but that's the chance I had to take.

Two weeks later, via the Embassy in Stockholm, three crates of pineapples arrived. They were presented to our Norwegian friends- and the ~~situation~~ predicament was resolved.

(Question): Your unit was kept in a state of readiness for participation in liberating Norway. Was there no need for military action?

(Answer): No, fortunately there was no fighting. We stayed in the Snåsta mountains until the 13th or 14th of May. Then we contacted the German commandex. We continued down to Steinkjer and then on to Trondheim. From there we were sent to Namsos to disarm the German garrison. That was my last assignment in Norway. I left the country in the middle of June and returned to the US where I shortly afterwards resigned from the OSS.

(Question): Do you still have friends and contacts in Norway?

(Answer): Yes indeed,--I'm a member of the Linge club and I try to keep in touch as much as time permits-- X-mas cards and letters once in a while -- especially to people like Herbert Helgesen, Gunnar Sønstebye, Ole Halvorsen, Kjell Sørli and many others.

(Question): Have you been back to Norway ~~since~~ since the war?

(Answer): Yes, in 1948 I went back to attend the unveiling of memorial to our fallen comrades who were killed in Trøndelag. On that occasion I was received by His Majesty King Haakon who presented me with the Order of St. Olaf. Besides, I visited Norway on several short trips during the time I was military attaché in Stockholm, 1951-1953.

Most of VI MENN's readers know William Colby's name from the extensive series about CIA in VI MENN 1974. But only a small group of people know Colby - the man. This is as true in the US as here. Face to face with VI MENN Colby gave details about his life that are unknown to many people.

" -I was born 1920 in St. Paul, Minnesota, half Irish, part English and part Danish. My father was an officer in the army, which meant that we moved a lot during the years I grew up. Among other places we resided in was Tientsin, China, where we lived for three years. "

After Colby's assignment in Norway he returned to university-life and graduated in law from Columbia University in 1947. He started out as the junior partner in a New York law firm.

The head of the firm was William J. Donovan, earlier chief of OSS. From 1949 to 1951 he was a lawyer for a national labor union and then became military attaché in Stockholm. 1953 he was transferred to the Embassy in Rome where he stayed until 1958.

In 1959 he was appointed First Secretary at the American Saigon Embassy, but transferred in 1962 to CIA and became Chief of their Far East office in Washington. He stayed there until 1969 when he joined the American AID office and went to Saigon to head up the so-called Pacification Program, and operation led by CIA and the South Vietnamese Government. He returned to the Home office in 1971 and was appointed CIA Director in 1973. He is married and has four children and earns about \$ 45.000 a year(225.000 NK).

(Question): Lately CIA has come under close scrutiny, sometimes intense criticism from the media, press and in books. Do you feel that the organization has lost prestige?

(Answer): No doubt about it. People at home and abroad appear to be afraid of CIA, - not the organization itself - but they fear what might happen if they in one way or another would be associated with CIA or suspected of dealing with us.

People tend to get all excited about anything that smacks of "secrecy", and CIA's activities have always been viewed as extremely secret. An insignificant episode, which normally would pass unnoticed, gets tremendous attention as soon as the name CIA is printed- even overseas.

- Particularly during the last couple of months, a situation has developed which borders on endangering the entire American intelligence effort. In this country it has developed into a mass-hysteria over any and everything that deals with CIA. This raises the question whether secret intelligence activities in the US

can be carried out at all in the future.- A number of intelligence organizations which we work with overseas have expressed strong reservations about the situation and have begun to ask themselves whether their classified information is safe in our hands. Colleagues, both abroad and at home, fear that their names will appear in print and be subject to public scrutiny, placing both their careers and lives in danger.

(Question): But havn't ^{some of/} your own employees been very much involved in sowing these doubts?

Marchetti's book was very revealing. VI MENN ran excerpts from it last August.

(Answer): Unfortunately this is true, and because of the present law there is very little we can do to prevent this form of information. We ~~must~~^{do} have a rather unique situation here in America, when the Director for the Intelligence Service can be dragged in front of the public to explain his actions. In principle I have no objections to this, because we ~~must~~ feel a great responsibility ~~to~~ the people. This is why we constantly inform the press about our activities. But this has to be done only within the limits of what security allows.

- I would also like to add that a book such as the one you named cannot be considered fully reliable. To a large extent it has to be based on surmise since no agent or official in this organization knows all the operations, or knows all the reasons behind specific secret operations.

We didn't have anything against the fact that Marchetti- or other agents wrote such a book, but we didn't want him to reveal secrets which could be harmful to the nation and reveal names of colleagues and covert operations,- which is what he wanted to do. That is simply irresponsible.

(Question): Does CIA not have the authority to stop leaks of this kind?

(Answer): Unfortunately we don't. We have laws on the books that make it a crime to reveal tax information from people's returns or their voting record, but not when it comes to information revealing the name of an intelligence officer or national security secrets unless it is given directly to a foreign power or damages

(Answer): Americ's interests. But there should at least be a moral responsibility in
cont.
cases like that.

I feel - and I believe my opinion is shared by many - that everyone who is employed by us must make a pledge not to reveal internal secrets - and Marchetti also did this. But this is the only security assurance we have. When we reminded Marchetti about this he refused to keep this pledge and claimed that it was unconstitutional and thus not binding. This is the reason we took legal action against him , in order once and for all to get clarification of this matter.

It can be extremely dangerous to be suspected of being a CIA agent. I can cite the case of Dan Mitrioni who was murdered by the Tupamaro guerillas in Uruguay. He was working down there for the American Peace Corps when somebody started the rumour about his being a CIA agent. It ended with fatal results for Mitrioni.

(Question): But it was never denied that CIA was operating in Chile- was it? What are the determinants for CIA to become actively engaged in a friendly country?

(Answer): The decision to undertake an intelligence mission is made after 4 questions have been aswered:

Is the intelligence information we seek sufficiently important to our nation?

What are the risks for exposure?

What are the consequences of such an exposure?

-And- how much will the operation cost?

In most "open" societies there is no need to resort to secret intelligence activities for obtaining the information we need. Thus it would be completely irresponsible and stupid to carry on such activities. Further, it's obvious that such covert activities in a friendly country could have very embarrassing consequences if they were revealed. -However, history again and again

(Answer): has shown that a friendly disposed country today may be the ennemy tomorrow.
cont.

That is why we in a few countries have to carry on careful intelligence activities, minimizing the risks involved, but with the objective of ~~the~~ obtaining information which could become exceedingly important to us.

- In regard to CIA's work in Chile it was necessary for the US to decide on specific actions which would be most useful to us as well as to those elements in Chile friendly toward us.

(Question): Does that mean that CIA didn't overthrow Allende?

(Answer): I don't believe anyone has seriously claimed that. Of course I can't go into any details about our work there,- I can only reiterate what I've indicated earlier to the Senate's Investigation Committee, and that is that we didn't have anything at all to do with the military coup in 1973. We had hoped that a more democratic government would come into power, but did not expect this to happen until the normal elections in 1976 and then ~~however~~ through activities carried out by the country's own democratic political forces.

(Question): Let's go back for a moment.- Who decides that CIA operations - such as the one in Chile- are to be carried out?

(Answer): It is our responsibility to find out what intelligence is needed for the future security of the USA. The planning of how this can best be done is our responsibility. The National Security Council has placed this task on CIA and into the hands of those who head up this organization.

Different congressional committees are appointed to judge whether the planned operations should be carried out. We don't go into any details but if there is a request to do so we act to satisfy the query. The final decision is made by a special committee ~~of~~ the National Security Council,- the so-called "Fourty Committee".

(Question): Obviously CIA keeps a watchful eye on what its competitors are up to in other countries as well. Can you tell us how many KGB-agents are operating in Norway?

(Answer): Not right off-- and I'm sure I wouldn't be able to give you the precise number.

But if you'd like I could ask my people to give you a total - as said though- it wouldn't be precise. as a matter of ~~fact~~ I'm sure that in this case the Norwegian authorities are better informed.

(Question): How about KGB-agents in the US?

(Answer): That's not our territory- that belongs to the FBI. Of course we do cooperate in this field. We keep an eye on foreign agents before they come into the country. As soon as they arrive here though we give all necessary information to the FBI; after that it's their business to watch and possibly -take action.

(Question): According to the FBI director there are so many Russian spies in America today that they have a hard time keeping them under surveillance. How do they get in?

(Answer): They come in as diplomats, business people, for study trips and things like that. This is to some degree the result of our so-called "Détente"- our peaceful coexistence with the Soviet Union. There has been a tremendous upsurge in visits from the Soviet Union during this period- many times more the number we had even only ten years ago. But let's take a look at how intelligence-work is actually carried out. There are three ways in which information can be obtained:

COVERT INTELLIGENCE:

This type is undertaken by Embassy- and business-people who collect information wherever they can without actually breaking any laws. Often there are also attempts to employ agents among the residents in a country who then in turn can continue to provide information. During the last ten years more than 400 Americans have been contacted for this purpose.

COVERT INTELLIGENCE:

This is the secret intelligence arm. The Russians have training facilities where their man is thoroughly trained in espionage and gets a complete introduction to the American way of life. After ending this training he is sent off to a ~~third~~ country,- let's say Norway as an example- and then he arrives in America ~~with~~ under a completely new identity. A fellow like that won't have any dealings whatsoever with the Embassy. He works entirely on his own. A good example of a man like that was Colonel Abel, who lived in Norway before he came to the US. As you recall, it was him we traded for the U-2 pilot Gary Powers.

COMMUNIST PARTIES:

- Particularly those in democratic countries which very frequently cooperate with the KGB.

Question): Hasn't "détente"-or the so-called friendly development agreements-made costly espionage operations superfluous?

Answer): I wish that were the case. The logical thought on which "friendly cooperation " is based was precisely to create an understanding with the Soviet Union founded on mutual respect for each other's strength. Thus it would only be natural to assume that the Russians would become more open and willing to exchange information. But this has not happened.

Today a Russian Embassy official can go to any little news-stand in this country and buy technical magazines which give detailed descriptions of the latest developments in technology, defense and space-research. In this way all foreign powers can get an endless amount of information about our weapons systems. In order to get similar information from - for example- the Soviet Union, we have to spend hundreds of millions of dollars for secret intelligence.

(Question): CIA is constantly accused of having overthrown other nations' governments and of meddling in their affairs. If this is true, why are such activities undertaken at all?

(Answer): There is a lot less of this type operation today than there used to be. Probably operations of this category were quite common in the 1950's when the western world was confronted by powerful communist pressures to achieve world dominance. Some of this also went on in the 1960's when the Soviet Union took over control in a number of free nations. However, today such operations have been reduced to an infinitely small percent of our work.

This is not to say that there may not still be situations where "a helping hand" could influence the atmosphere or circumstances in a manner that would help avoid a serious future crisis.

Question): Do you feel that even so-called friendly nations also have their intelligence-people stationed in the US?

Answer): Yes, absolutely- we've identified many of them through the years. But it should be made clear that this is nothing unusual in any way. I believe there exists a kind of international understanding in a world- such as the one we live in today- that we we'll all keep an eye on each other without anybody getting up tight about it. After all, this kind of activity has been going on in the world ever since Moses sent a man from each of the tribes to spy in the land of Canaan.

(Question): How does the KGB compare with CIA in size and efficiency?

(Answer): - I believe that the Soviet Union's intelligence system is in the process of undergoing considerable change,- and a change for the better. It used to be that their main objective seemed to be to steal secrets. Now they've adopted a more scientific approach. They've established institutions for studying the USA with the help of modern methods. They've found out that it's easy to obtain reliable data from us without resorting to covert

(Answer): operations and to analyze and computerize these. They then form a picture
cont. of what we have in the way of weapons and supplies. The KGB's main problem
now is to try to analyze what our future plans are.

Don't interpret this to mean however that they no longer are making use of
spies. They still have a very far-reaching world-wide network of secret
agents. Each Soviet mission overseas- such as delegations to international
organizations - has a quota of KGB-or GRUpeople - that latter being the
military intelligence branch.

(Question): Lately CIA has been accused- and severly criticized- for spying on Americans.
~~mission~~ It's claimed that CIA has thousands of american names in its
files- is that true?

(Answer): We have no police-authority and have nothing to do with internal security
matters. But obviously our files with contain thousands of american names.
This does not mean , however, that they are under surveillance. Let me give
a few examples:

We hire thousands of people for our offices, and thousands
of others have applied or are in the process of applying for jobs with us.
Of course we have to investigate these people. among others. After all,
we do have to know who is working for us. These names can all be found
in our files.

Everyone who works for us on a part-time basis- such as elec-
tricians, plumbers, carpenters etc. - are also registered in our files. But
of course they are not under any kind of surveillance. From time to time
we go through these files and destroy the materials which are no longer
relevant. Maybe this should be done more often, but this is a question of
having the time and the qualified personnel that can do this work.
There are probably also names of individual Americans of another category
in our files. These are people who we think might have contact with foreign

(Answer): agents. These are not so few as one might think. But as I mentioned before
cont. -the surveillance of these individuals comes under the jurisdiction of the FBI.

Question): Mr. Colby, - is it really necessary for the US to maintain a large secret intelligence organization?

Answer): In my view it is absolutely essential to do so. Not only for the sake of our military security, but as a safety-precaution towards a whole range of other problems confronting us today. This means terrorism or the type of problems that can arise in any place but which in the last analysis affect the US. It is CIA's responsibility to keep track of what necessary steps might be needed. Unless we recognize such dangers we might find ourselves in some very embarrassing situations.

Frequently it is the intelligence-effort that provides the base for our ability to come together with other great powers and to sit down at the conference table. One example of this is SALT(Strategic Arms Limitation Talks) conference with the Soviet Union. Without the thorough knowledge of Soviet military strength ~~which~~ provided by CIA's intelligence effort it would not have been possible for us to enter into negotiations.

We have another important task - the US peace-keeping role in the world. Time after time there is proof that our information enables our government to step in before the situation reaches a critical point. It is easier to bring two opponents together at the conference-table than to stop a war.

(Question): - Operation Phoenix 1968 in Vietnam was such an effort to achieve a settlement between the South-Vietnamese government and the Viet Cong by removing the ultra-radical elements. CIA- and you personally- have been accused of killing more than 20.000 Vietnamese in that operation. Is that true?

(Answer): I gave a complete testimony on this matter to the Congress in 1971, and you're welcome to a copy of it. This is the basis for the above assertions. However, there were individual sentences taken out of context with the result that the version became completely twisted. What I really said at that time was that

(Answer): 20.587 guerrillas who opposed the plan were killed. But I also said that of
cont. these 87% were killed in military action. 12% fell in encounters with the
police who later tried to capture them- and only a very few died in some
other way.

I have admitted that terrorist activities took place, but I maintain
towards VI MENN - and others- that these were unusual and only a few in number
which were at variance with our directives.

(Question): Do you know anything about the claims of Soviet experiments with " remote
control" of the human brain? In other words a telepathic way of influenc-
ing people on the other side of the earth?

(Answer): I do know that there have been experiments with this in several places in
the world, but I don't believe that anyone yet has achieved any important
results in this field to speak of.

(Question): One last question before we conclude- Mr. Colby.- What is the truth about
the " Glomar Explorer" which raised the russian atomic submarine that had
been shipwrecked in the Pacific outside Hawaii? (See VI MENN nb. 24)

(Answer): "That unfortunately is a matter which I cannot discuss at the moment",
William Colby answers with a smile. -

He ask us to convey his personal greetings to all his old comrades in
arms and to his peronal friends in Norway.
